

***Section XI* — Blueprint for the 1998-2000 Accountability Systems**

System Evolution

There is general agreement that the accountability system as implemented to date does not yet reflect appropriate standards of performance for all rating levels, nor does it fully integrate all statutory components. From its inception, the system was designed to evolve over time to increase standards, incorporate additional indicators, meet statutory requirements as quickly as possible, and improve the information with which accountability decisions are made.

In order to provide schools and districts with adequate time to prepare for the increasing rigor of standards, the commissioner's blueprint for accountability system criteria and standards through the year 2000 is presented in this section. School district, business, and governmental representatives met during the fall of 1995 and 1996 to assist in its development. Although changes may occur prior to implementation for a variety of reasons, the information in this section should still be useful as a tool to set the expectations and timetable for performance growth.

What is Expected to Remain Stable

The strongest advice voiced by the school district and community representatives assisting in the definition of the 1998 - 2000 accountability systems was the need for stability. So, although standards and indicators will evolve over the next five years, the basic structure of the system remains the same. Components of the system remaining stable under this blueprint are:

- the rating categories;
- the use of base and additional indicators;
- the use of individual student groups;
- TAAS results used for accountability purposes based on the October subset of students;
- the phase-in process for new indicators;

What's Stable
(*cont.*)

provisions for small numbers of students and schools serving grades not tested through TAAS; and reports and recognitions based on the performance results.

Anticipated Developments

Previously Scheduled Changes

Ratings

TAAS passing rate standards for the *Academically Acceptable / Acceptable* ratings will be raised five percent per year through the year 2000, when the standard will reach 50 percent. TAAS passing rate standards for the *Recognized* ratings will be raised five percent per year through the year 1998, when the standard will reach 80 percent.

The roles of Required Improvement in determining district and campus ratings, and of Comparable Improvement in determining campus ratings will change in 1998.

Indicators

There will be a third Additional Indicator — participation in the recommended high school program — phased into the system in 1999. Other assessment measures will be introduced as report-only indicators on AEIS as the phase-in schedule is completed.

**Legislative
Action**

The 75th Legislature which convened in January 1997 may modify accountability related statutes, which could alter the existing blueprint, although major changes are not anticipated.

Calendar Changes

Minimally, there will be calendar implications with the incorporation of Comparable Improvement into the ratings evaluation in 1998. If the two rating release dates are maintained, districts and campuses whose rating could be affected by the measure will receive a *Delayed* rating on August 1 because Comparable Improvement cannot be determined until the full statewide set of TAAS results are available. In 1998, Comparable Improvement can impact those initially rated *Academically Unacceptable / Low-performing*. In 1999, the measure can also impact the *Recognized* rating.

Including Additional Students Tested on TAAS

Special Education Students

There is increasing interest in including the TAAS results of tested special education students in the accountability rating system. Special education results would be incorporated into campus and district ratings in the 1999 ratings cycle by aggregating them into the all students and student group calculations; "special education" would not be a separate hurdle. October subset matching criteria must be met. Legislative proposals to assess special education students with instruments other than TAAS may also impact these plans. The commissioner continues to explore this issue with educators.

Spanish TAAS

Similarly, there is interest in including the results of students tested on Spanish TAAS in the ratings system. Although the commissioner continues to explore this issue with educators, tentative plans call for including the results of all students in grades 3-6 tested on Spanish TAAS in the evaluation of the ratings in 1999. October subset matching criteria must be met. Legislative proposals to assess limited English proficient students with instruments other than TAAS may also affect this plan.

School Completers Indicator

The Legislature has expressed interest in using a longitudinal completion rate as an alternative indicator to the annual dropout rate. To develop such a measure, enrollment, attendance, dropout, and GED completion information must be linked across four or six school years, depending upon whether a grade 7-12 or grade 9-12 rate is calculated. To implement such a change, data collections will likely change; districts would report all student withdrawals instead of dropouts only.

Using a completion rate to determine ratings requires a statutory change to the list of indicators. The earliest that a completion rate could be used in the accountability system would be 1999.

A completion rate would: 1) have the advantage of, unlike the annual dropout rate, being a positive indicator; 2) permit school leaver recovery searches over multiple years; and 3) encourage longitudinal planning for improving graduation rates. Also, a longitudinal rate would be more stable over time. Issues to address in creating this measure include: 1) developing a fair process for attributing the withdrawal and re-enrollment of mobile students and recovered dropouts; 2) dealing with bad PIDs; and 3) potentially expanding student-level data collections.

TAAS Testing Calendar Changes

At press time for this manual, an advisory committee to the commissioner has recommended eliminating the optional TAAS testing dates for schools and districts operating in year-round education settings. The optional dates are not being used by the majority of schools and districts using YRE calendars.

The committee has also recommended administering the mathematics and reading sections of the TAAS for grades 3-8 approximately one week earlier so that all schools and teachers can receive student results before the end of the school year.

If these changes in the testing calendar were implemented, a single ratings release date could be scheduled in August. Without such changes, the application of Comparable Improvement in determining campus ratings would require lengthening the ratings release calendar. The commissioner has made no decisions on this issue and continues to explore these recommendations with educators.

Ratings for Alternative Education Schools

At press time for this manual, the commissioner is considering phasing out the optional evaluation procedures for alternative education schools. The Legislative Budget Board has recommended that optional evaluation be dismantled and all schools be rated by the standard evaluation methodology. These alternative procedures cannot be eliminated until the PEIMS data collection system provides for dual attribution of students. Changes are being implemented in the *1997-98 PEIMS Data Standards*. Therefore, optional evaluation will likely be in effect at least through the 1998 rating cycle. The commissioner has made no final decision on this issue beyond 1998.

Future Research

The agency is exploring issues that may impact the accountability system in future years. These include use of the Texas Learning Index, and options for how to incorporate end-of-course examination results for students who meet the graduation testing requirement. These research projects are briefly described.

TLI Measures

Additional TLI-based analysis of performance growth is being conducted by the agency. This research may lead to additional information reported to districts and campuses as well as potential use in determining ratings.

End-of-Course Examinations

Beginning with the 1998-99 school year, Texas students may fulfill their testing requirements for graduation by demonstrating satisfactory performance on either:

the TAAS exit-level tests in reading, writing, and mathematics; or

three end-of-course examinations.

Statute permits the successful completion of the Algebra I, English II, and either Biology I or U.S. History end-of-course examinations as a secondary route to fulfilling the exit testing requirement. The Algebra I and Biology I tests are currently available, but the English II and U.S. History tests are under development and the benchmark administration is scheduled for 1998. Participation rates on end-of-course examinations are reported on AEIS.

Raising Performance Standards For Improvement

Through the year 2000, TAAS performance standards to earn the *Recognized* and *Academically Acceptable / Acceptable* ratings are being raised. Because of this, there are already high expectations for performance growth for the lowest-performing schools and districts. Without significant and sustained effort from Texas schools, the number failing to meet the minimally acceptable standards of performance will increase.

In 1998 and beyond, Comparable Improvement may affect the accountability rating of a school. CI will be evaluated after a preliminary rating has been assigned based on comparisons of performance to absolute standards for the base indicators. With the implementation of Comparable Improvement, the accountability system will both recognize high performance growth by creating opportunities for raising ratings, and lower the ratings of schools with a sustained pattern of declining performance growth compared to similar schools.

Planning for the Future Accountability System Blueprint

The outline in this subsection represents the blueprint which will be used for developing the statewide accountability systems for 1998 through the year 2000. This was defined with the assistance of focus groups of educators, other district and regional education service center representatives, and business and education partners. Table 4 on pages 84-85 presents the blueprint for the accountability system, 1997 through 2000.

Table 4: AEIS / ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS AND STANDARDS 1997 TO 2000

	1997	1998	1999	2000
BASE INDICATORS				
TAAS Indicators <i>Reading, Mathematics, Gr. 3-8, 10 [Non-Spec. Ed.]</i> <i>Writing, Gr. 4, 8, 10 [Non-Special Ed.]</i> <i>Special Education Results, Gr. 3-8, 10</i> <i>Spanish Reading, Mathematics, Gr. 3-4</i> <i>Spanish Reading, Mathematics, Gr. 5-6</i> <i>Spanish Writing, Gr. 4</i>	Report Report Benchmark Benchmark	Report Report Report Report		
Annual Dropout Rate				
Attendance Rate				
BASE INDICATOR STANDARDS				
TAAS Passing Standards <i>Exemplary</i> <i>Recognized</i> <i>Academically Unacceptable / Low-performing</i>	>=90.0% >=75.0% <35.0%	>=90.0% >=80.0% <40.0%	>=90.0% >=80.0% <45.0%	>=90.0% >=80.0% <50.0%
Dropout Rate Standards * <i>Exemplary</i> <i>Recognized</i> <i>Academically Unacceptable / Low-performing</i>	<=1.0% <=3.5% >6.0% ★	<=1.0% <=3.5% >6.0% ★	<=1.0% <=3.5% >6.0% ★	<=1.0% <=3.5% >6.0% ★
Attendance Rate Standard †	>=94.0%	>=94.0%	>=94.0%	>=94.0%
Required Improvement: <u>Maintain</u> Recognized <i>TAAS Reading, Mathematics, and Writing</i>				
Required Improvement: <u>Earn</u> Recognized <i>TAAS Reading and Mathematics</i> <i>TAAS Writing</i>		TBD ‡ TBD	TBD ‡ TBD	TBD ‡ TBD
Required Improvement: <u>Avoiding</u> Academically Unacceptable / Low-performing <i>TAAS Reading and Mathematics</i> <i>TAAS Writing</i> <i>Dropout Rate</i>		TBD ‡ TBD TBD	TBD ‡ TBD TBD	TBD ‡ TBD TBD
Comparable Improvement: (Campus Only) <i>TAAS Reading and Mathematics</i> <i>Raise Low-performing to Acceptable ‡</i> <i>Raise Acceptable to Recognized ‡</i> <i>Lower Recognized to Acceptable</i>	Report	warning only		

(Continued)

	1997	1998	1999	2000
ADDITIONAL INDICATORS				
<i>College Admissions (HS)</i>				
<i>TAAS / TASP Equivalency (HS)</i>				
<i>Recommended High School Program (HS)</i>	Report	Report		
ADDITIONAL INDICATOR STANDARDS				
College Admissions Tests Standards ** [Participation / % Meeting Criteria]	70.0% / 50.0%	70.0% / 50.0%	70.0% / 50.0%	70.0% / 50.0%
TAAS / TASP Standards [% Graduates Meeting Criteria]	80.0%	80.0%	80.0%	80.0%
REPORT-ONLY INDICATORS				
<i>TAAS Science, Social Studies</i>	Report	Report	Report	Report
<i>TAAS Exemptions</i>	Report	Report	Report	Report
<i>Percent Taking End-of-Course Exams (HS)</i>				
<i>Biology I</i>	Report	Report	Report	Report
<i>Algebra I</i>	Report	Report	Report	Report
<i>English II</i>	Field Test	Benchmark	Report	Report
<i>American History</i>	Field Test	Benchmark	Report	Report
<i>Advanced Academic Courses (HS)</i>	Report	Report	Report	Report
<i>Advanced Placement (AP) Examinations (HS)</i>	Report	Report	Report	Report

Used for ratings or acknowledgments.

- ★ Special conditions for a single dropout rate exceeding the 6.0 percent standard apply.
 - * The dropout rate indicator could be replaced by an appropriate measure of completion, if statute is changed.
 - † The attendance rate standard will be waived for the *Academically Acceptable / Acceptable* rating if failure to meet that standard would be the sole reason that the school would be *Low-performing* or the district *Academically Unacceptable*.
 - ‡ In 1998 and beyond, the role of improvement measures in determining accountability ratings is under development, pending legislative action.
 - ** College admissions criterion standards have been re-evaluated based on the 1996 recentering of the SAT I.
- TBD *To Be Determined*.

Blueprint Planning (cont.)

TAAS Subject Area Tests. Assessment results for reading, writing, and mathematics will be used to determine accountability ratings. Science and social studies results are currently scheduled to be report-only indicators on annual AEIS reports. Reading and mathematics are assessed at grades 3-8, and 10; writing is assessed at grades 4, 8, and 10; and science and social studies are assessed at grade 8.

Subject area standards will be maintained in the accountability system and they will increase over time. The TAAS standard for the *Recognized* rating will increase to 80.0 percent passing in 1998. The TAAS standard for *Academically Acceptable / Acceptable* rating will increase by 5 percent each year so that the 50.0 percent passing standard is reached in the year 2000.

As previously mentioned, the possibility exists to base ratings on the performance of all students tested on TAAS who meet the October subset criteria, beginning in 1999.

Dropout Rates. No changes to the dropout rate standard are scheduled at this time. As previously mentioned, a completion rate measure is being considered to ultimately replace the dropout rate as a base indicator. Implementation of such a substitution would require a statutory change.

Attendance Rates. There are no plans to modify the attendance rate standard or to implement an attendance rate standard for individual student groups at any rating level.

Comparable Improvement. Comparable Improvement will begin affecting campus ratings in 1998. (See more detail later in this section.)

Other Indicators. Other statutorily defined indicators not used to determine ratings will be designated as either Additional Indicators upon which Additional Acknowledgment can be determined, or Report-Only Indicators, which will appear on AEIS reports and possibly the School Report Card. Other indicators adopted by the State Board of Education will become Report-Only Indicators.

Note that measures of TAAS exemptions are currently Report-Only Indicators. It is possible that minimum standards for percent of students tested may become part of the rating criteria in the future.

Comparable Improvement in 1998- 2000

Overview

In 1998, Comparable Improvement will be implemented as part of the rating criteria. The accountability system will:

report Comparable Improvement on campus AEIS reports; and

use Comparable Improvement to:

- ➡ raise accountability ratings under specific circumstances; and
- ➡ warn that a *Recognized* rating could be lowered the following year under specific circumstances.

In 1999 and beyond, the accountability system will:

report Comparable Improvement on campus AEIS reports; and

use Comparable Improvement to:

- ➡ raise and lower accountability ratings under specific circumstances; and
- ➡ warn that a *Recognized* rating could be lowered the following year under specific circumstances.

Decisions about the use of Comparable Improvement as a criterion for state-funded award programs will be made at a later date.

Rating Impact

Although Comparable Improvement measures, *i.e.*, the quartile distributions of TAG results, can be determined and reported for every campus, they will be used only for lifting *Low-performing* schools into the *Acceptable* category, and impacting the *Recognized* rating under specific conditions.

Overview

No district ratings can be directly affected by campus Comparable Improvement. Campus accountability ratings can be raised or lowered by Comparable Improvement only under very specific conditions. Those are itemized in Table 5 below:

Table 5: SUMMARY OF COMPARABLE IMPROVEMENT RATING IMPACT

Rating Change	Quartile Standard	TLI Growth Standard
Raised from <i>Low-performing</i> to <i>Acceptable</i> when the deficiency is in mathematics or reading	Math: top half (Q1 or Q2) Reading: top quartile (Q1)	must be positive
Raised from <i>Acceptable</i> to <i>Recognized</i> when TAAS reading / mathematics passing percent is between 75.0-79.9%	top quartile (Q1)	must be positive
Lowered from <i>Recognized</i> to <i>Acceptable</i> in 2nd year; in 1st year a warning is issued	bottom quartile (Q4) in same subject - 2 consecutive years	must be negative both years

NOTE: A school rating could not be lowered from *Recognized* until 1999.

Exemplary

Comparable Improvement performance will not affect the rating of any school meeting *Exemplary* performance standards.

Acceptable

Comparable Improvement performance will not affect the rating of most schools initially rated *Acceptable*. Only those schools slightly missing the *Recognized* rating have the opportunity to use CI to improve their rating. (See *below for the specific conditions*.)

Recognized

For a school to earn the *Recognized* rating, it must meet additional performance requirements after performance against the base indicator standards is evaluated. These are described according to the initial evaluation against base indicator standards.

Recognized
(cont.)

CAMPUSES MEETING *Recognized* BASE INDICATOR STANDARDS.

Comparable Improvement will be evaluated for these campuses as follows:

MAINTAINS *RECOGNIZED* RATING.

- ➡ If Comparable Improvement criteria are met then the rating remains *Recognized*.
- ➡ If Comparable Improvement is in Q4 and TLI growth for either reading or mathematics is negative for the current year, but not the prior year, a warning will be issued. Warnings would first be issued in 1998.

RATING LOWERED TO *ACADEMICALLY ACCEPTABLE* / *ACCEPTABLE*.

The accountability rating assigned in the second year of declining performance will be *Acceptable* instead of *Recognized*, even though the higher rating's base indicator standards were met. For a rating to be lowered, a school must have:

- ➡ had both a declining TLI growth value and a Q4 Comparable Improvement value in the same subject (reading or mathematics), for two consecutive years; and
- ➡ received a *Recognized* rating with a warning the previous year.

The first lowered ratings could occur in 1999.

CAMPUSES WITHIN 5 PERCENT OF *Recognized* TAAS STANDARDS.

If the TAAS passing rate for reading or mathematics, all students or any student group, is between **75.0 - 79.9 percent** passing, the school can be rated *Recognized* if:

it meets the *Recognized* standards for the TAAS writing, the attendance rate, and the dropout rate, if appropriate;
AND

TLI growth for that subject is in the top quartile (Q1) of the comparison group, and is positive.

Without this opportunity, a school with this level of performance would be rated *Acceptable*.

Low-performing

A school initially rated *Low-performing* because of TAAS reading or mathematics (but not writing or the dropout rate) can use Comparable Improvement as a mechanism to earn the *Acceptable* rating if the school's quartile value in the deficient subject (if that subject is reading or mathematics) meets the Comparable Improvement standard:

If the deficient subject is mathematics, TLI growth is in the top half (Q1 or Q2) of the comparison group distribution and is positive; or

If the deficient subject is reading, TLI growth is in the top quartile (Q1) of the comparison group distribution and is positive. The differential standards were set to emphasize the critical role of reading in academic success.

CI Summary

Comparable Improvement will not affect the accountability ratings of the majority of schools who receive an initial rating of *Acceptable*. Only those schools to be lowered from *Recognized* or those to be raised from *Low-performing* due to Comparable Improvement will be affected by the measure

Required Improvement in 1998- 2000

Statute defines two improvement measures; Required Improvement and Comparable Improvement. Many legislators and educators have expressed the desire to use one improvement measure in determining ratings. Interactions between two improvement measures adds complexity to an already detailed system. Addressing these issues raises the following kinds of questions:

Recognized

In 1998, Required Improvement will no longer be a requirement to maintain the *Recognized* rating for reading and mathematics because the TAAS passing standard (80 percent) will have been fully implemented for that category. Comparable Improvement is scheduled to be used as a gate into *Recognized* for campuses, under specific conditions.

*Should a "Required Improvement" standard for **Recognized** status be maintained for TAAS writing?*

*For districts, should "Required Improvement" standards for **Recognized** status be maintained for TAAS reading, mathematics, and writing?*

Low-performing

Statute permits the use of Required Improvement as a mechanism to lift a school or district out of the lowest rating category. To move to one improvement measure would mean addressing the following questions:

*For campuses, should "Required Improvement" as a gate out of **Low-performing** be eliminated for TAAS reading and mathematics, and campus Comparable Improvement be used solely for this purpose?*

*For districts, should "Required Improvement" as a gate out of **Academically Unacceptable** be eliminated for TAAS reading and mathematics?*

*Should "Required Improvement" for TAAS writing and dropouts as a gate out of **Low-performing** / **Academically Unacceptable** be eliminated for campuses and districts?*

If Required Improvement is maintained for at least some indicators, should the calculation be redefined?

Although Comparable Improvement can serve as a substitute for Required Improvement in some cases for campuses, elimination of Required Improvement in its entirety will completely eliminate the opportunity for districts to have an improvement mechanism to avoid the *Academically Unacceptable* rating if any standard for *Academically Acceptable* is failed.

Calendar

Decisions concerning the continued use or discontinuation of Required Improvement will be made in the fall of 1997, when planning for future implementations of the accountability system begins. Educators are urged to transmit comments on those and any other implementation issues to the agency. Instructions for comments and questions are provided in Section XII, *Additional Information*.

